United Nations A/56/145

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 July 2001
English
Original: French

Fifty-sixth session

# Request for the inclusion of an item in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session

# Observer status for the International Hydrographic Organization in the General Assembly

## Letter dated 2 July 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Monaco to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 13 e of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and by order of the Government of the Principality, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the provisional agenda of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly of an item entitled, "Observer status for the International Hydrographic Organization in the General Assembly".

Pursuant to rule 20 of the said rules of procedure, an explanatory memorandum in support of the above request and a draft resolution are attached (see annexes).

(*Signed*) Jacques **Boisson**

01-44454 (E) 100701 100701

# Annex I

## Explanatory memorandum

### Establishment

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is a consultative and technical intergovernmental organization established by a convention done at Monaco on 3 May 1967. Pursuant to Article 102 of the Charter of the United Nations, the Convention was registered with the United Nations Secretariat on 22 September 1970. IHO has 69 member States from every region. It has no authority over the national hydrographic offices of the Governments parties to the Convention.

Following the conferences held in St. Petersburg in 1908 and 1912, 24 States met in London in 1919 for a hydrographic conference during which it was decided that a permanent body should be established. At the invitation of Prince Albert I of Monaco, a noted marine scientist, the International Hydrographic Bureau was provided with premises, and it began work in 1921 with a view to making navigation easier and safer throughout the world by improving nautical charts and documents.

The 1970 Convention results from the desire of the participating Governments to pursue on an intergovernmental basis their cooperation in hydrography.

### Work of the International Hydrographic Organization

The International Hydrographic Organization has the following functions:

- The coordination of the activities of national hydrographic offices;
- The greatest possible uniformity in nautical charts and documents;
- The adoption of reliable and efficient methods of carrying out and using hydrographic surveys;
- The development of the sciences in the field of hydrography and the techniques employed in descriptive oceanography.

To this end, the Organization has two principal bodies:

The International Hydrographic Conference and the International Hydrographic Bureau, administered by the Directing Committee.

**The International Hydrographic Conference** is composed of representatives of the Governments of member States. It meets in ordinary session every five years.

It main objectives are:

- To give general directives on the functioning and work of the Organization;
- To elect the members of the Directing Committee and its President;
- To examine reports submitted to it by the Bureau;
- To make decisions on all technical or administrative proposals submitted by member Governments or the Bureau;
- To approve the budget.

**The International Hydrographic Bureau** is responsible for carrying out the tasks assigned to it by the Convention or the Conference. It comprises the Directing Committee, which is made up of three members elected for five years, including the President as representative of the Organization, and of technical and administrative personnel.

It is the responsibility of the Bureau in particular:

- To bring about a close and permanent association between national hydrographic offices;
- To study any matters relating to hydrography and the allied sciences and techniques and to collect the necessary papers;
- To further the exchange of nautical charts and documents between hydrographic offices of member Governments;
- To circulate the appropriate documents;
- To give guidance and advice upon request, in particular to countries engaged in setting up or expanding their hydrographic service;
- To encourage coordination of hydrographic surveys with relevant oceanographic activities;
- To extend and facilitate the application of oceanographic knowledge for the benefit of navigators;
- To cooperate with international organizations and scientific institutions which have related objectives.

The International Hydrographic Organization also has a Finance Committee, which monitors the financial management. It meets during the sessions of the Conference.

The Organization has juridical personality. In the territory of each of its members it enjoys, subject to agreement with the member Government concerned, such privileges and immunities as may be necessary for the exercise of its functions and the pursuit of its objectives.

The regular expenses of the Organization are met from the ordinary annual contributions of member Governments in accordance with a scale based on the tonnage of their fleets. Donations, requests, subventions and other funds may be accepted subject to the approval of the Finance Committee.

**Technical assistance and capacity-building**

A recognized source of guidance in all matters relating to hydrography and nautical cartography, the Organization often acts as a coordinating body for the promotion of projects to establish or strengthen the hydrographic capabilities of developing countries.

It routinely encourages the conclusion of bilateral and multilateral technical assistance agreements while endeavouring to establish even closer relations with the international finance institutions. Advisory visits are arranged in any country that requests them, especially if it is in the developing world.

The Organization encourages the creation of fellowships for hydrographers and nautical cartographers, such as those given by the Japan International Cooperation Agency or by the hydrographic offices of the United States of America, India, France, Spain, Chile, Italy, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Russian Federation.

The Organization has concluded an agreement with the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Maritime Academy of Trieste (Italy) in order to coordinate the training of hydrographers from developing countries.

**Publications**

The Bureau ensures the dissemination of more than 40 publications, of which the most important are:

- *National Maritime Policies and Hydrographic Services*;
- *Resolutions of the International Hydrographic Organization*;
- *Standards of Competence for Hydrographic Surveyors* (adopted by all training institutions);
- *Chart Specifications* (adopted by the governmental hydrographic offices);
- *IHO Standards for Hydrographic Surveys* (adopted by governmental hydrographic offices);
- Standards for electronic navigational charts (highly complex standards adopted by IMO);
- Standards for the dissemination of information on maritime safety (in cooperation with IMO);
- *Limits of Oceans and Seas* (a new edition of this complex publication is now being prepared and is an essential tool for cartographers);
- *Manual on Technical Aspects of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea*;
- *General Bathymetric Chart of the Oceans*, and international bathymetric charts (in cooperation with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). This work, initiated by Prince Albert I of Monaco in 1903, is extremely useful for scientific research and for management of the seabed and coastal zone;
- *Gazetteer of Geographical Names of Undersea Features*;
- *International Hydrographic Bulletin*, a monthly publication which deals with topical subjects of worldwide interest;
- *IHO Yearbook*, listing addresses and references for all the hydrographic offices of member States and non-member States, together with details of their personnel and vessels.

The International Hydrographic Organization has a web site for the use of members States and the public: www.iho.shom.fr.

## Reasons for requesting observer status in the General Assembly of the United Nations

At the invitation of the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs, the Legal Counsel, the International Hydrographic Organization has been associated on a regular basis with the work carried out at meetings of the States parties to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. It has also participated in the open-ended informal consultative process which the General Assembly established by its resolution 54/33 in order to facilitate its annual review of developments in ocean affairs.

Observer status, by allowing the Organization to participate in the sessions of the General Assembly, will enable it to work more closely with the programmes and institutions of the United Nations system with a view to increasing cooperation and coordination in various marine science activities and to develop its training and capacity-building activities in the areas described above.

## Annex II

### Draft resolution

### Observer status for the International Hydrographic Organization in the General Assembly

*The General Assembly,*

*Wishing* to promote cooperation between the United Nations and the International Hydrographic Organization,

1. *Decides* to invite the International Hydrographic Organization to participate in its sessions and its work in the capacity of observer;

2. *Requests* the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to implement the present resolution.